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Ryskamp On "Calvinistic Action And Modern Economic Patterns"

Note To Readers

What follows is a continuation of a review of Dr. Henry J. Ryskamp's essay in *God-Centered Living or Calvinism in Action,* a book containing fourteen contributions by Reformed scholars. (The publisher of the book is the Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan; unfortunately the book is out of print, and readers will be able to get only second-hand copies.) Ryskamp is the head of the economics-sociology department of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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As readers know, PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is interested especially in *human action,* the whole field of human conduct, a field covered by a relatively unknown term, *praxeology.*

A church elder is expected to be blameless in doctrine and in *life. Life* here means *action.* It should be noted that the Calvinistic Action Committee which sponsored this book is a committee operating specifically in the field of praxeology, the same field selected by PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM for an examination of ethical principles.

All the essays in the book *God-Centered Living* are about some field of *action.*

It is customary to consider political economy to be the field of action only in regard to material (or economic) interests — buying, selling, producing, consuming, etc. But we are not in PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM relating only economics to ethics and to religion; we are, instead, relating the *whole field of human action* to ethics and religion. A comprehensive approach to all human action is the same as making a praxeological approach. PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM's interests are praxeological and not merely economic.

A great economist, Dr. Ludwig von Mises, visiting professor at New York University, has written an extraordinary book about praxeology with the title *Human Action* (Yale University Press, 1949, $10). This monumental book covers not only praxeology but concerns itself as well with the epistemological problems of the praxeological sciences. Readers who are equipped to read serious works in the field of epistemology and praxeology should examine this great text.

Naturally, if the Calvinistic *Action* Committee undertakes to put out a volume by fourteen distinguished contributors in exactly the field in which PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM operates, we have a profound interest in what appears in that volume. That explains our reason for giving attention to essays in *God-Centered Living.* We regret that we see matters pertaining to human actions differently from what some contributors do. In fact, we view their ideas on human action with alarm, and unhappily, with strong opposition. Our convictions do not permit us to let stand unchallenged

many of the ideas which are prominent in *God-Centered Living*. PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM thinks so differently from the Calvinistic Action Committee that we are certain to be impatient with each other and possibly will not really understand each other.

Fifteen years ago we would have read *God-Centered Living* with substantial approval. We held similar ideas. Although temperamentally disinclined even to amend our ideas, fifteen years of painful intellectual adjustment have gone into abandonment of what we formerly held and into acceptance of completely different ideas. Our mental change was slow, stubborn and distressing. We know of no reason for others to change their ideas more quickly or easily. We are prepared for violent attacks on our comments on these essays. If fifteen years from now some have come to see praxeological matters as we see them today, we shall be amply rewarded.

We ascribe the erroneous ideas in *God-Centered Living* to unfortunate worldly and unscientific influences which during all their lives have been "registering" on the minds of the authors in this volume whose essays we are reviewing. Without wishing to be unkind or censorious, our view is that what is advanced in *God-Centered Living* in several of the essays is basically neither Biblical nor scientific nor good morality.

The situation is complicated by a substantial dualism in ideas in these essays. By certain quotations a case might be made that there is agreement between ideas in *God-Centered Living* and in PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM. Other selected quotations could indicate no real agreement at all. The fact is that the program outlined in some essays in *God-Centered Living* partly works "both sides of the street." This is especially true of Ryskamp's essay.

What follows completes our review of this essay. Much more could be written outlining further disagreements besides those we are here briefly stating.

Erroneous Description Of The Industrial Revolution

Ryskamp erroneously describes what happened in the Industrial Revolution. He writes, pages 184-185 (our italics):

> Although the elements of the new order [the Industrial Revolution] were in themselves in the main defensible and desirable, the way in which they were used contributed to the setting up of a pattern of relationships which the enterprisers and leaders could not consciously have desired to achieve. Extremes of poverty and of riches remained, although general productivity increased. New and *more sordid* living conditions than we today can imagine *resulted* from the *application of the forces* which caused so *rapid an increase in industrial production and exchange.*

What "forces" caused the industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism? Max Weber wrote:* *Calvinism.* Ryskamp agrees that Calvinism was one of the important factors in the Industrial Revolution. And so we are inescapably brought to the conclusion that Calvinism *helped* to cause "new and more sordid living conditions."

In the same breath Ryskamp writes contradictorily that there was a "rapid . . . increase in industrial production . . ." In other words the production of goods increased but living conditions became worse—"more sordid."

If these two ideas (more sordid living conditions and more production simultaneously) are to be considered to be true despite their rather obvious contradiction, then there is a plausible explanation, namely, the new capitalists lived *very* extravagantly and consumed *more* than the increased production. But *that* is something of which no one has ever accused the Puritans and others active in creating Capitalism. They were notoriously thrifty and modest in their living. What Ryskamp writes must be a self-contradiction, because if more was produced and if the employer did not consume that, then the employes must have had more for themselves.

But the case for the benefits to employes during the Industrial Revolution should not rest there. Recently a book has been published entitled *Capitalism and the Historians,* (edited by F. A. von Hayek, The University of Chicago Press, 1954; $3.00). Readers are advised to read this book in order to have evidence that the customary description of the worsening of living conditions for the people in the Industrial Revolution is a misrepresentation.

*See PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, September 1956.

But it is not necessary to read an excellent book to learn that what Ryskamp writes is erroneous. Here is a well-known fact: the Industrial Revolution resulted in an enormous increase in population.

Why?

Could population have been expected to increase if conditions had worsened? The answer must be no. Conditions must have improved. What happened was that the babies who died off as flies because of bad circumstances *before* the Industrial Revolution were able to survive just because of the Industrial Revolution.

That conditions were bad in fast-growing industrial towns need not be disputed. The question is: were the new living conditions under the Industrial Revolution better than previously? The standard to go by is not today's standard of living, but the then immediately preceding standard. On that basis the Industrial Revolution was a God-send to the poor.

Despite all the foregoing someone may argue that the capitalists should not have made large profits and that those profits should have gone immediately and largely if not entirely for better living of the poorer classes. Some day we shall, we hope, be able to devote an issue to that unsound and mischievous idea. It sounds attractive, but will impoverish the poor and so be contrary to their real interests.

Abraham Kuyper talked two ways about the Industrial Revolution. First he described it as a terrible manifestation of individualism, and (so he thought) consequently of unbrotherliness. But in other connections he described it differently and contradictorily, namely, the Industrial Revolution had so expanded production and prosperity that it was necessary to change the rules in order to abandon individualism, and to adopt instead interventionism — that is, government controls directed by people who have a charisma from God. This idea of turning to interventionism because individualism had become too big a success, appeared to us, at that time and always since then, to be the most perfect case of intellectual inconsistency that could be imagined. Abandon individualism *because of its productivity!*

Unacceptable Statement On The Relation Of Godliness And Prosperity

Ryskamp writes (pages 185-186):

> Without disputing the elements of truth in the statement that prosperity is a mark of the favor of the Lord, and poverty, of His visitation . . .

We are surprised at this statement. PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM affirms that there is a normal (not an invariable) relationship between obedience to the commandments of God and prosperity. But we have never declared — or at least we should not have done so — that "prosperity is a mark of the *favor of the Lord.*" There are people who are prosperous (temporarily) by disobeying the commandments of God. But Ryskamp here indicates that "prosperity is a mark of the *favor of the Lord.*"

Nor can we accept the even more-extreme statement that "poverty [is a mark] of His visitation." Suppose someone is poor because of illness, or family burdens, or accidents, or because he selects a poorly-remunerative vocation, or because he has few talents, or merely because he is young and must yet make his way in the world. And this "poverty" is to be described as a "visitation" from God! We disagree.

Our proposition has consistently been more limited. Obedience to the law of God, regardless of what the purpose may be and regardless if it is mere rationalism and common sense and without religious motive — such obedience, in accordance with the praxeological laws which God has established, normally results in personal and community prosperity; there are manifold exceptions. Whoever declares more than that is declaring too much.

Ryskamp As A Relinquisher Of A Voluntary Economy

The teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is that coercion is contrary to the Law of God; a large part of the Sermon on the Mount pertains to the Sixth Commandment, Thou shalt not kill (coerce).

The essence of a capitalist or a free market society is non-coercion. The essence of interventionism is a government's right to coerce. Ryskamp, we are distressed to say, finally concedes the right of coercion. He writes, page 186 (our italics):

> It is true that business men, charged with unfairness in the treatment of their employes, often parry the charge with the contention that *they cannot afford to pay more than the prevailing price of labor.* If the argument is sound — and there undoubtedly is some truth in it — it merely goes to prove that *prevailing price, acting alone, does not serve as a just regulator of economic relations.* As time passed and our modern individualistic economic system revealed its great productiveness, it also revealed the development of economic evils that cried to high heaven for some arrangement more just than price alone.

Ryskamp here repudiates the "free market." He says labor prices may be unsatisfactory and in the final case are not "just."

What he is really saying is that God is not "just." Ryskamp is talking of labor prices freely determined; men in a free price market have *freely* arrived at a labor price. Still, Ryskamp says, it may not be *just.* Obviously then, this is not something that reflects wrong relationships *between men;* this is not a violation of brotherly love because the brotherly love was manifested by the freedom allowed in determining the price.

We are forced then to the conclusion that Ryskamp is really protesting *against conditions;* this is a protest against the welfare-shortage which God created* and to which attention is called by Moses in one of the earliest chapters in Genesis. The inference that the over-all labor price in a free market is unjust is a disguised complaint by Ryskamp against the realities of life.

Let us consider an example. A boy in his early teens very much wants a bicycle. He has only $20 to pay for the bicycle. A

*On *welfareshortage* see PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, July 1956, pages 209-219. In our opinion, the *welfareshortage* was implicit in creation, and is not an effect of the Fall, although the most painful effects of the *welfareshortage* stem from sin.

neighbor boy of the same age has a bicycle for sale. He paid $35 for it, and is willing to sell it for $30. Nobody else wants a bicycle; nobody else has a bicycle for sale. The boy with the bicycle is, shall we say, a member of a family no poorer and no richer than the family of the boy without the bicycle. One boy wishes to sell; one boy wishes to buy. Of course, no deal can be made unless the seller reduces his price to $20. But look at this seller's "loss"! The price was not "just" to him.

But what are the facts? The realities of the situation are the inescapable realities of life. The buyer in a sense had a welfare-shortage — he lacked the full $30. For the seller to sell below $30 meant that he would feel the pinch of welfareshortage. Too bad that we all cannot have everything we want. Too bad that we are finite and need things. Too bad no "just" price could be arrived at in the case we cited.

And what is the explanation? All complaints about a price being unjust although arrived at in a genuinely free market — are disguised complaints against God; He has not given us everything that we want.

And so modern interventionist Calvinism is prepared to step in to "relieve" the situation by government intervention. Government interventionism presumably can, in a Godlike manner, reduce the welfareshortage. It has that charisma from God!

That charisma presently consists in inflationism. Inflationism does not multiply goods, which is what people really want and need; it merely multiplies the quantity of money. (See June 1956 issue of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM.) Inflationism is insidious and damnable theft. It is for that reason that we favor simply obeying the Law of God rather than relying on a charisma.

And so Ryskamp concludes in the text that follows the foregoing quotation that because of "injustice" the unions are authorized to be *coercive,* because the *free* market does not produce a "just price." And then he adds to that that "social control" is necessary; he, of course, means the state, which has the benefit of a charisma from God.

The difference between the principle here stated by Ryskamp — that free prices fail to be the most just system for organizing markets — and the principle in which PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM believes is unbridgeable. If what Ryskamp here implies is actually Calvinism, then we wish to withdraw from Calvinism. Our reason is that we would then consider the ethics of Calvinism no longer to be a branch of the ethics of Christianity.

Ryskamp's Intellectual Sources

Ryskamp quotes as authorities Reinhold Niebuhr, R. H. Tawney, Kenneth E. Boulding, and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. None of these men is an *authority* for us.

Niebuhr is a socialist and the most distinguished propagandist of the Social Gospel in the United States.

Tawney is a socialist who has devoted his most important work to the idea that the consciences of Calvinists have not been and should not be comfortable about capitalism; instead, their consciences (he believes) should lead them toward favoring socialism.

Kenneth E. Boulding is professor of economics at the University of Michigan. He is one of the eight contributors to a book edited by David McCord Wright, entitled *The Impact of the Union* (Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1951). Boulding's contribution is entitled "Wages as a Share of the National Income." The cast of Boulding's thought is determined by Keynesianism. Keynes (1883-1946) is the notorious economist who taught old fallacies in new terms, and flattered interventionist and socialist politicians by giving an alleged economic justification for their sinful policies of inflation and interventionism. Keynes's basic ideas included the thought that the spendthrift is the benefactor of society and the thrifty person the bad person in society; also that prosperity can be accomplished by printing money. He favored a program of permitting labor unions to force wages, by means of coercion, higher than they should be, but then slyly nullifying the benefit of the increase, by raising prices by increasing the quantity of money. The two policies that Keynes favored were (1) coercion plus (2) theft (that is, violations of the sixth and eighth com-

mandments). He considered that these two sins would offset each other. His idea was the silly one that the common man would be deceived by high *money* wages and would not know that his *real* wages had not increased! Boulding himself is described in a book which we plan to review next month as "an economist who is close to the National Council"; any economist "close" to the socialistic National Council of Churches is suspect, in our judgment.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., is a well-known leftist professor at Harvard University. He is also a columnist for the radical daily paper, the *New York Post*. He is a vice president of the socialistic organization known as the Americans for Democratic Action, usually designated by the initials ADA. The notorious ADA is sympathetic with the socialist Labor Party of Great Britain.

Omission Of Mention Of The Real Sins Of Capitalism

What is capitalism? The sins of capitalism cannot be described unless capitalism is defined. Maybe one of the simplest definitions is that capitalism is the economic system which acknowledges the right of the private ownership of property. But many ideas go along with that, such as, freedom and noncoercion, honesty, and truthfulness. These features add up to a "free market." Call that capitalism, if you wish.

If we have been having capitalism in this country, has it no "sins" as it actually operates?

We believe that capitalism as it operates in the United States has some very great sins. These sins are contrary to the Law of God. Ryskamp does not refer to those sins.

Progressive Calvinism intends in some future issue to consider the sins of capitalism. We fear that we shall discover at that time that many Calvinists wish to see those sins of capitalism to be continued.

* * *

It is not feasible to devote more space at this time to the ethics and economics outlined in "Calvinistic Action and Modern Economic Patterns." We consider those ethics and economics to be neither moral, nor Biblical nor economic. fn

Five Ideas That Will Stultify Calvinism

We submit a blacklist of five terms, of varying meaning, which are not, in our opinion, valuable or effective ideas for promoting that brand of Christianity historically known as Calvinism:

1. Common grace
2. The antithesis
3. Sphere sovereignty
4. "The powers that be" (as meaning the "right" of interventionism—which is *more* than the restraint of evil by the government)
5. Charisma

The first four of these are highly-promoted Kuyperian ideas,* adopted by nearly all in the Christian Reformed church and taught in a church-owned school. Item (5) is not openly taught but underlies the idea in item (4).

Except in a few instances none of these five ideas has been "sold" to the American public. The first three are awkward and vague and even erroneous ideas. It is our opinion that they never can be "sold." A business man may spend $5,000,000 for a new advertising program. But the advertising will not succeed eventually unless his merchandise is good. None of the first three ideas is good enough merchandise to obtain a permanent market.

The last two ideas are peculiarly nonsalable in the United States. They go against the whole tradition of the citizens of this republic.

The lamentable fact is that Americans of Dutch extraction are endeavoring to "sell" these five inferior ideas to Americans under the name of religion and Christianity and Calvinism. If this is to be a "contribution" of the Calvinistic Action Committee, it is to be devoutly hoped that the contribution will be disdained.

*Ideas of Abraham Kuyper, early in this century Prime Minister of The Netherlands, and a leading Calvinist theologian, educator and writer. See PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, October 1956 issue, pages 299-305.

In place of these five somewhat confused, mischievous and complexified ideas we recommend these five simple understandable ideas:

1. Providence, including the natural and praxeological laws of God;
2. The Law of God (Decalogue);
3. Individual and group freedom;
4. Limited government, with authority only to resist internal and external evil;
5. The revealed Will of God — no acceptance of the idea of a modern charisma to bureaucrats and politicians.

Maybe the Christian Reformed church in its centennial celebration in 1957 will endeavor another futile advance with its pet ideas. If the attempt is made, the denomination will "fall on its face." The indifference with which these ideas will be heard, even by fellow Christians let alone nonbelievers, will be a complete answer that these terms are ineffective catchwords and cannot be used as magic to win converts.

If the Christian Reformed church wishes to obtain members from outside their present numbers, it is recommended that it keep its message simple and Biblical and avoid complexifying its appeal by the five notions originally listed. fn

The Prophet Iddo

Western civilization is in considerable danger of "cracking up." It has some conscienceless and remorseless enemies on its borders. Large sections of the world are being agitated by propaganda designed to arouse covetousness and envy and hatred.

But the real danger to Western civilization is *within its own* borders and stems largely from false ethics promoted by religious people. The danger to Europe and America is that the great

principles of morality inseparably and uniquely associated with the ethics of the Christian religion will be abandoned. Those principles are very simple:

1. No violence, except to restrain evil as defined in the Decalogue (Sixth Commandment);
2. The stability of the family (Seventh Commandment);
3. No theft (Eighth Commandment);
4. No falsehood (Ninth Commandment); and
5. No poisoned motivations — no covetousness (Tenth Commandment).

Beyond these simple, elementary rules the matchless Christian ethics teach FREEDOM. All the rest of life is free from coercion. (See PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, 1955, pages 28-146.)

Whatever is done or arrived at or determined by that primary and genuine scriptural freedom must obviously be noncoercive in character and merely be an adjustment to reality (the welfare-shortage). It may appear to be coerced but the coercion is not by men but by circumstances.

The moment that one endeavors to change a situation which has been developed under freedom, by means of legalized coercion, then the ethics of the Christian religion have in principle been abandoned, despite any lip service given to scriptural ethics. A new ethic, a new religion, has been substituted for the old.

Covetousness, which is a sin against the practically abandoned Tenth Commandment, cannot be tolerated, let alone encouraged, without bringing on a complete nullification eventually of Commandments Six to Nine.

The popular modern Calvinist doctrine of brotherly love essentially justifies and promotes covetousness. Read some articles in a book as *God Centered Living* with the thought of the sin of covetousness in mind and see whether there is significant reference to covetousness. Or are some articles in the book in fact substantially a defense of covetousness?

It is a mistake in some circles to talk of *ten* commandments. The number has been reduced to *nine.*

There is, of course, no chance for either (1) the poison of covetousness or (2) the evil of coercion affecting the outcome of a situation if transactions are kept *free.* Both covetousness and coercion break to pieces on the real freedom of the other party, as waves on rocks.

To be genuinely effectual, covetousness needs to be able to use the strong arm of coercion. In a *nominally* moral society, coercion beyond the restraint of evil, namely, to the much more extended and dangerous idea of positively "doing good" is not granted to individuals but only to the government. However, according to the Law of Moses the legitimate right of coercion is restricted to resisting evil; there is no right given to anyone nor to any organization to coerce the doing of good. That act of coercion itself is evil.

When young we had a friend, a student at Princeton Theological Seminary. He sent us a program of the commencement exercises. The baccalaureate sermon or commencement address was scheduled to be given by a minister named Dr. David James Burrell (1844-1926) of the Marble Collegiate Church on Fifth Avenue in New York.

Shortly thereafter we were in New York for the first time, and we decided to attend services in the Marble Collegiate Church. Dr. Burrell preached on the "Prophet Iddo," a character then unknown to us by that name.

Iddo is the man told about in I Kings 13. The story is well known. A prophet (Iddo) came out of Judah to testify against Jeroboam's evil altar at Bethel. Iddo declared it would be destroyed and desecrated. He had a command to return at once to Judah by a different route than he had come. His return evidently was to have something of the character of a hard-to-trace flight.

In Samaria there was an old prophet. He had a son. The son heard the denunciatory prophecy of Iddo and went home and told his father.

The father immediately set out after Iddo. Iddo apparently was not making haste on his return to Judah, and the old man found him sitting under an oak and invited him to return. Iddo refused saying he was under instructions from God to return promptly and by a different road.

"But," — and here is the fatal allegation — declared the old prophet from Samaria, "I am also a prophet as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of Jehovah saying, Bring him back with thee into thy house, that he may eat bread and drink water." (To this Scripture adds the comment: "*But* he lied unto him.")

Iddo was seduced. He went back. He dines with his host. But before Iddo leaves the false old prophet reverses his story and foretells Iddo's doom. The prophecy proves to be correct.

Iddo is killed on the way home by a lion. The old prophet goes after the body and has it buried with the specific instruction to his sons that he is to be buried in Iddo's grave. Why? So that his own bones will not be disinterred and burned on the altar at Bethel when the doom forecast by Iddo is fulfilled.

Having told the interesting story with great skill, Dr. Burrell made his simple application with great force, towit: the danger for the church today is not from the outside but from false prophets on the inside, as the old prophet of Samaria.

It might be added that many who declare they speak for the Lord no more do so than the old scamp who said that "an angel spake unto me by the word of Jehovah . . ."

If the Western world listens to old prophets in Samaria it will surely be destroyed.

The old prophet at Samaria declared he had a charisma from God. There are many people, as Iddo, who will listen to a statement alleged to be a charisma from God, but which obviously violates the commandments of God. On the basis of the outcome for Iddo, PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM intends to follow no charisma which violates the revealed Law of God. We do not want it to be written about us (I Kings 13: 24-32):

> And when he [Iddo] was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his body was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it; the lion also stood by the body. And, behold, men passed by, and saw the body cast in the way, and the lion standing by the body; and they came and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt.
>
> And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard thereof, he said, It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the mouth of Jehovah: therefore Jehovah hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of Jehovah, which he spake unto him. And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled it. And he went and found his body cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the body: the lion had not eaten the body, nor torn the ass. And the prophet took up the body of the man of God, and laid it upon the ass, and brought it back; and he came to the city of the old prophet, to mourn, and to bury him. And he laid his body in his own grave; and they mourned over him, *saying,* Alas, my brother! And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones besides his bones. For the saying which he cried by the word of Jehovah against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass.

Pretty crafty. To keep his own bones from being disinterred and burned according to the prophecy, he seduced Iddo and caused his death. To know what happened long afterward read II Kings 23:15-18.

> Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, even that altar and the high place he [King Josiah of Judah] brake down; and he burned the high place and beat it to dust, and burned the Asherah. And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount; and he sent, and took the bones

> out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and defiled it, according to the word of Jehovah which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these things. Then he said, What monument is that which I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God, who came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel. And he said, Let him be; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria.

The old prophet of Samaria is symbolic: the greatest political dangers besetting the western world are domestic and not foreign, and stem from sanctimonious religion prating about charisma. fn

Religion And Two Classes Of Sciences — The Natural Sciences And The Praxeological Sciences

The *natural* sciences include physics, geology, paleontology, chemistry, zoology, biology, astronomy, etc. The natural sciences primarily pertain to sub-human matters.

The *praxeological* sciences include history, political science, sociology, economics, etc. These all pertain to human action. In that sense they are "higher" than the natural sciences.

In Christian groups there is an erroneous evaluation of the relative importance of the impact of the natural sciences and of the praxeological sciences on the tenets of the Christian religion. Developments in the natural sciences are often considered to be antireligious. Religion is, therefore, not infrequently partly anti-science; that is, more or less hostile to the *natural* sciences.

But strangely enough that antiscience attitude of "Christians" seldom extends to the praxeological sciences. The "findings" of these "sciences" are not questioned and disputed as are some of the findings of the natural sciences.

For example, a slight deviation by "science" from Scripture regarding the character of creation becomes a major question of heresy; but an important deviation in "science" in regard to human

action becomes accepted among Christians. What various sociologists teach, for example, is widely accepted as Christianity. The same thing holds true of the teachings of various economists. But the fact may be that the teaching of these sociologists and economists may deviate much more significantly from Scripture than the teaching of the natural sciences.

Christians appear to be blind to the fact that the praxeological sciences are potentially and actually far more dangerous to the tenets of Christianity than are the natural sciences. There are two reasons why the praxeological sciences are more significant to religion than are the natural sciences:

1. Human action, the field of the praxeological sciences, involves inevitably questions of ethics. Ethics is an essential part of religion.

2. If the epistemology and methodology of the praxeological sciences is considered properly to be the same as in the natural sciences, then one has basically become a Comtian positivist. Somebody once wrote to the effect that: it is tragic that anyone should think that positivism and Christianity can logically be taught on the same campus. Popular sociology and economics today are largely positivist in character.

And so if someone is to go heresy-hunting he can, if he wishes, go after the natural sciences. He will come home, maybe, with a dead jack rabbit. But if he goes heresy-hunting in the praxeological sciences, he may come home with a dead lion or elephant. We are not recommending to anyone that he go heresy-hunting. We are only indicating what the size of the game is that is to be got in the respective fields.

If one asks a member of the Christian Reformed church for "heretical" ideas propagated by the natural sciences, he will probably give a quick answer. But ask him for a heretical idea in the field of economics or sociology and he will give you a blank stare. He will not be able to give you an answer.

This is a curious case of ignorance regarding just where "science" is chipping away at the foundation of religion. fn

Ethical Ideas Potentially Imbibed By Pre-Seminary Students

A completed theological training presumably will have required:

1. 8 years in a grade school
2. 4 years in a high school
3. 4 years in a college
4. 3 years in a theological seminary

By the time a man goes into theology he is likely to be 22 years old (6, plus 8, plus 4, plus 4). In those 22 years he may easily have acquired unsound notions on the history of mankind and how to interpret that history according to principles of political science, economics, sociology, etc.

Maybe after 16 years of such earlier schooling a theological school can, in three years, correct any unsound ideas already acquired, by teaching doctrine and ethics without referring specifically to antecedent erroneous praxeological ideas; but that is to be doubted. However, to relate Biblical doctrine and Biblical ethics carefully to the praxeological sciences assumes that the professors in the theological school are genuinely informed in regard to the praxeological sciences, that is, that they really understand modern political science, economics and sociology, that they know just where errors may be, and that they carefully eradicate those ideas from the minds of theological students.

However, when a man sits in the pews in Christian Reformed churches he may well begin to wonder about a series of interesting questions:

1. What praxeological ideas are the unsuspected premises to what is taught in so-called Christian grade schools and high schools?

2. What praxeological ideas are openly taught in the denominational college?

3. Does the theological school merely teach certain undisturbing doctrinal ideas, not realized as possibly being in conflict with what was taught during the earlier educational career?

4. Do students entering the theological school realize that there is any inconsistency between what they learned in praxeological courses in the college from what they now hear in the seminary? If there is an inconsistency, how do they resolve it — do they abandon their praxeological ideas, or do they give only semi-sceptical lip service to theological ideas, or do they leave conflicting ideas unmolested side by side, and illogically accept both — or what?

5. Or does the theological school accept unreservedly the findings, and the epistemology, and the methodology of the modern praxeology of the undergraduate schools?

If a man listens — *listens* — while sitting in a pew in a church service he will without great difficulty find some kind of an answer to these questions .

Some day the time may be auspicious to examine the written, indisputable record on questions such as these:

1. Are any of the praxeological sciences taught in violation of scriptural standards?

2. Is philosophy and the history of ideas taught confusingly?

3. Is the standard for appraising literature specious and corrupting?

These — praxeology, philosophy and literature — are important subjects in a school. It is in order to get ideas in these fields taught in a certain manner that people are reconciled to being assessed or to making voluntary contributions to support a school.

What is taught in colleges regarding the relation of men to things (ordinary economics) is such that there is reason to believe that no one whose education as a preacher began in a typical undergraduate school has a sound understanding of how the relationship of men to things affects the proper view of men to men. We regret that we doubt that anyone trained in some denominational colleges, in the immense and controversial field of praxeology,

can possibly be qualified as a preacher on practical everyday questions, unless he has escaped from some ideas taught in the undergraduate schools. fn

The Source Of Authority

We take the following from a writing by Wilford I. King, economist for the Committee for Constitutional Government.

The Eighth Commandment

> Suppose that, in an isolated valley, there are three men, each working for himself on his own farm. One is very diligent, and, when winter arrives, has accumulated a large store of foodstuffs, and has on hand ample feed for his horses, cows and poultry. The others, having taken life easy during the summer, find that long before spring, they are short of provisions. If, then, they combine forces, set upon their neighbor, and seize his possessions, both capitalists and collectivists will agree that the two lazy farmers have violated the Eighth Commandment — in other words, have stolen the diligent farmer's goods.
>
> But, suppose, instead, that the two insist upon establishing a democratic government for the valley. They hold a "town meeting," and, by a vote of two to one, adopt a statute requiring that all share equally in the summer's produce. Is this a perfectly legitimate action, falling outside the scope of the Eighth Commandment? If not, just how many persons does it take to establish a government and make the procedure ethical?
>
> —Requoted from *Freedom First,* Spring, 1956

It is exactly this question: *who or what grants authority* (that is, *proper* power) *for certain actions,* which constitutes the basic question regarding the "powers that be."

1. The ancient doctrine was that mere power granted authority.

2. The modern doctrine is that a mere majority grants authority.

3. The confused church doctrine is that "the powers that be" possess authority. This simply approves power that exists whether seized and operated by a minority or a majority, that is, the church doctrine facilely approves either (1) or (2).

4. Guglielmo Ferrero said* that a government has authority provided it permits opposition to its policies by peaceful processes; this granting of freedom peacefully to change power gives authority, or legitimacy, to a government. There is no question that this is a far better answer than any of the preceding three.

5. But the complete answer is this: *that* government legitimately has authority which completely obeys the Law of God. It is that obedience that gives *authority* — not the raw power of a dictator; not the half plus one of the majority; not some mysterious charisma from God under the slogan, the "powers that be"; not a majority which permits freedom of thought and speech, and its concomitant, free elections, good in itself as this freedom may be. Instead, authority rests in one thing only — righteous acts according to a known, written, superb law — the Law of God. No "power" that exists has any *authority* in itself, from the people, nor directly from God, nor by granting great and wonderful freedom. Authority cannot exist unless it has merit in itself, intrinsic in itself because it conforms to the Law of God.

What has just been declared is, it must be admitted, completely at variance with the teaching of some modern Calvinists. We consider their teaching as listed under (3) to be an evil thing, condemned by the Law of God, and sure to carry bitter fruits with it.

The Christian Reformed church has recently officially taken a position that is based on the proposition that it is not the Law of God which governs the state, but the law of the state which prevails above the Law of God. This, we believe, happens to be a reversal of a natural and proper order.

*See his *Reconstruction of Europe*, especially Chapter IV, entitled, "The Principle of Legitimacy."

Authority is not intrinsic in man because he has the elevated position of a human being. We are not founding authority on the dignity of man or on any natural law. These are humanist and vague ideas. But the Law of God is simple and clear enough. It and it alone conveys authority. fn

Vanden Bosch On "Calvinism And International Relations"

This contribution by Dr. Amry Vanden Bosch to *God-Centered Living* puts forward as its basic idea that in international relations a man, if he is to be true to the tradition and principles of Calvinism, will be a proponent of a world government (a regulatory institution), and in a specific sense be an enthusiast for the United Nations and its agencies. Unfortunately, it is impossible to persuade us that this idea has merit. We do not believe that supporting the United Nations represents good Calvinism; just the contrary.

Distinguishing Between A World Society And World Community

Vanden Bosch distinguishes between a world society and a world community. He says that a world society presently exists, but not a world community. He defines the terms as follows: the world is a society when there is "material interdependence"; the world is a community when there is "material interdependence *plus some degree of moral unity*" (our italics).

Vanden Bosch hopes for the establishment of a world community. He writes: "A world society is not enough. Unless there is a world community the world regulatory institutions which are necessary [in our atomic age] for our survival cannot be established, . . ." He then outlines two agencies to establish a world community:

1. Mission activity, that is, spreading the "Good News";

2. Development and maintenance of international cooperation.

We shall comment briefly on these ideas and appraise them.

The Gospel As An Agency To Accomplish "Community"

Adherence to the Christian religion does, it must be acknowledged, establish a community but only a community of a sort, that is, a community with definite limitations.

The term which Vanden Bosch uses for mission work is the "Good News." Assume that several people accept the Good News, how much *community* does that establish? The Old Testament considered the Israelitish people to be a community and that they knew the Good News. However, the northern and southern kingdoms fought lustily together. Common possession of the Good News did not in itself establish good international relations. It is only late, namely, in the New Testament, that Christ designates himself as the "vine" and his followers as the "branches," and declares that there is a certain unity among them. There undoubtedly is, although at various times the several branches of Christianity have earnestly continued to engage in attempts to exterminate each other. Whereas Christ clearly never wanted a coerced unity accomplished by force, His followers have often thought differently. They frequently think that they are doing a good work when they endeavor to destroy each other.

Imagine a typical member of a moderate-sized church, say one of 150 families or 600 persons. You profess one faith; you live in the same community. There is intermarriage. You help bury the dead. You celebrate the same "communion." You are all "branches" of the same "vine." This is one phase of the situation. But it is a restricted view. The unity or the community is not nearly so extensive as a sensible interpretation of the idea suggests.

There are old and young in that community. The "community" between them is very limited. The old are crotchety toward the young and the young are disrespectful of the old.

There are rich and poor in that community. The "community" between some of them is also very limited. A man who has the

opportunity to accumulate assets and does so *by thrift* differs greatly from a man who also has the same opportunity to accumulate assets but does not because of *disinclination to thrift*. Such men at 60 have no temporal "community" of broad significance. They have steadily drifted apart. They think very differently. They are not really sympathetic to each other. They look at each other *critically*. These remarks do not refer to differences in assets resulting from other causes than inclination or disinclination toward thrift. There will be plenty of community between an old rich man who believes in thrift and a young poor man who practices thrift. There will also be plenty of community between a young spendthrift going through his inheritance and a poor old spendthrift. In short, there are many basic differences between men who possess the same Good News, but are temperamentally and temporally altogether different. On those differences there is no "community."

There are also wise and foolish in that church community. The "community" between them is also very limited. There is less chance of sympathy between a wise man and a foolish man, than between a young and an old man, a rich and a poor man. Solomon even advised to stay away from a fool. A typical church has as many fools as any other group of the same size.

In a typical congregation differences of views may therefore be such that there is only "limited" community. The idea of a close community in a denomination is really only a hope and an ideal. When then the Good News is defined as referring to a certain mystical unity in this life it refers to a specific "community" and not a general "community."

The unity of the church may be considered to be best manifested in the possession of a common eschatological hope — a common hope regarding the *hereafter*. That, of course, does not contribute much to community in *this* life. This hope in something in the hereafter is really divisive between believers and nonbelievers. Christians do not all believe in universalism, that is, they do not believe that everybody will be in the same good place in the hereafter. An eschatological hope which only some people have does not, then, constitute a universal agency for developing a "com-

munity" in this life. There is no general unity or community to be obtained from ideas in the field of eschatology.

We doubt that a world community can be developed on the basis of the Good News, if that is understood to refer primarily to salvation by grace and to eternal life.

The Good News can be understood more broadly, namely, as referring to the keeping of the Law of God. Then indeed there might be earthly, present-day, world-wide community. The minimal agreement that would be necessary would be acceptance of the commandments which pertain especially to practical matters in this life, towit: (1) No violence (Sixth Commandment); (2) Preservation of the family (Seventh); (3) No theft (Eighth); (4) No fraud (Ninth); (5) No covetousness (Tenth). In so far as Vanden Bosch refers to a unity based on common acceptance of the Law of God — and he does refer to agreement on moral standards — we concur with him. He has something there.

Will present-day mission activity establish a world *community?* If that is the hope, we believe it is a vain hope. Many of the Christian missions throughout the world are modernist in two senses: (1) their Good News is not evangelical or eschatological, and (2) their Good News is not the traditional definition of the Second Table of the Law; instead they teach a *social* gospel which is in disharmony with the real meaning of the Law of God; the definition of brotherly love which is given in this social gospel is divisive to mankind and ruinous to prosperity; one definition of the social gospel is that it establishes claims of extensive *stewardship* which justifies removing the Tenth Commandment from the Decalogue. Poison people's minds by the idea that they have claims beyond Biblical charity and there is no *community* possible any more. The idea of stewardship is not so much directed at enlarging the generosity of the man who is the "steward" as it is to whet the appetite and covetousness of the man who is to be the recipient. That is the "appeal" in the idea of stewardship. The social gospel produces just the opposite of what Vanden Bosch hopes from the Good News; it disturbs community; it does not create community.

It is unrealistic to declare that the mission activities of all orthodox missions are uncontaminated by the divisive ethics of the

social gospel; the ideas of the social gospel have already, for example, deeply penetrated the Christian Reformed church.

Christian missions are not only likely to be ineffective in establishing community for the reasons given but also for other reasons. They are too small to affect the huge non-Christian mass of people. Further, those people do not wish to accept the whole Christian religion. They want the *results* of the Christian religion but not the *religion itself*. Nehru, for example, sets conditions according to which missionaries are permitted to operate, which conditions nullify the teaching of "the whole counsel of God." The doors to full mission work are closed in many countries of the world.

Development And Maintenance Of International Cooperation

After devoting one page to missions as one hope for world community, Vanden Bosch devotes three pages to a more practical agency for community, namely, the "development and maintenance of international cooperation." In his thinking this means the acceptance and support of the United Nations. Vanden Bosch writes: "The Calvinist, then, is a supporter of the United Nations" (page 251). We were saddened when we read that. Right then we concluded that we were not and never would be a "Calvinist."

Vanden Bosch's program can be summarized as follows:

1. Accept a super-government above the United States (something world regulatory, and that can adjudicate what we consider domestic affairs). For example, Vanden Bosch writes: "We must henceforth demand that our government submit all disputes with other states over legal questions to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and it must be left to the Court to decide whether the question falls within its competence" (page 251). Unless we submit to such an international tribunal, we are, he writes, guilty as a nation of "lawlessness." Men, apparently in his thinking, will finally create a super-government and that government will finally be the sole repository of that wonderful charisma from God, by which that government is authorized to demand obedience because it is "power" about which the Apostle

Paul speaks. Men will create this super-government but then it must be obeyed because God ordained it.

2. Neutrality on world problems is suggested as being a doubtful morality. This is an interesting idea which we believe has some merit and which we may analyze at another time. However, it may be that Vanden Bosch questions the moral right to neutrality only for a special reason, namely, in order to justify the United Nations whenever it meddles into *every kind* of controversy: local, internal, religious, sectional, or what have you.

3. Differences in standards of living in rich countries and poor countries must be reduced; otherwise communism will spread. This idea gets down to this: support the backward nations extensively, or otherwise the prospective violation of the Tenth Commandment (covetousness) by the poor nations will overwhelm the rich nations. The argument really is that it is good to submit to this type of blackmail. We do not believe that such "bribes" will ever satiate covetousness and we do not believe that international aid, as popularly understood, will establish a world community. We believe it will work toward the reverse result.

4. If it is valid to restrict immigration (Vanden Bosch is not sure of this) nevertheless free trade should prevail. We completely agree on this, except we go further. There is a vital difference between free movement of people (free immigration) and free movement of goods (free trade). These two must be distinguished. Control of immigration is, in our opinion, perfectly permissible; otherwise there is no protection against irresponsible increases in population. An existing civilization cannot be preserved with a genuinely irresponsible birthrate; deny the right to restrict immigration and a self-defense against an overwhelming danger is thereby denied. In regard to free trade, which does help every man (but does not leave him irresponsible) PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is unqualifiedly for free trade. There are, however, some specific aspects to be taken into account so that we be not abused by other countries despite our free trade policy. Vanden Bosch indicates that we severely restrict free trade by our tariffs. He neglects that practically universally throughout the world three conditions exist which makes the direction of his criticism toward the United States not wholly valid:

(a) Their tariffs against us are higher than ours against them.

(b) They have *import quotas* and *exchange controls* which have restricted international trade many times more than all our tariffs have ever done.

(c) They have a specific type of monopoly known as cartels, the essential characteristic of which is that they sell at a high price at home and dump at lower prices in other countries. (Consider rayon yarn as of today; one European country sells us such yarn at about 30c per pound. Their domestic price is 41c. This is a dumping operation, which justifies the United States having a protective tariff against such dumping. However, the real correction consists in the reduction of the tariff abroad, so that that country cannot hold its domestic price at 41c, thereby creating a cartel, that is, monopoly situation.)

5. Vanden Bosch repeatedly refers favorably to the various sub-departments of the United Nations, towit: the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (which has drafted a document entitled, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," which he calls "remarkable" but which we consider subversive and menacing); the Food and Agriculture Organization; the World Health Organization; and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (the notorious Unesco).

With the general approach of Vanden Bosch to world problems, namely, that they are to be solved largely through the United Nations and its agencies, we are in unqualified, condign disagreement. We consider this solution to be contrary to the teaching of Scripture for reasons which can be easily understood.

Granted that Scripture teaches brotherly love; granted that it teaches that all men must be treated kindly; *it also teaches not to cooperate with any government which operates on other principles than the Decalogue.*

The cases of the ancient Israelitish kingdoms are classic. They were warned to avoid foreign alliances with any power with different religion and ethics. Trust was instead expected to be

placed in God, which obviously means, in a practical sense, trust in obeying the Law of God. See II Chronicles 14:8-13; II Chronicles 20:1-24; II Chronicles 25:5-11; II Kings 19:9-20; II Kings 20:12-18. The right rule by which to guide conduct, namely, that rule which consists in *obeying the Law of God, is consistently considered in Scripture to be a more powerful shield and buckler than all the alliances of the world.*

Here are two incidents in the life of King Asa of Judah, in one of which he put his trust in God and what was right, and in the other in which he put his trust in an alliance.

> And Asa had an army that bare bucklers and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand: . . .
>
> And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an army of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; . . . Then Asa went out to meet him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathat at Mareshah. And Asa cried unto Jehovah his God, and said, Jehovah, there is none besides thee to help, between the mighty and him that hath no strength: help us, O Jehovah our God; for we rely on thee, and in thy name are we come against this multitude. O Jehovah, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee. So Jehovah smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled. (II Chronicles 14:8-12.)

Thus far King Asa was doing all right. Then he sought an alliance with King Benhadad of Syria; it turned out badly. He created, as the text indicates, a more-powerful enemy in place of an old one. In this, history is repeating itself. We have assisted Russia only to have developed her as an enemy, as Asa developed Syria as an enemy. There is "nothing new under the sun."

> In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any one to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of Jehovah and of the king's house, and sent to Benhadad

> king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me. And Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelmain, and all the store-cities of Naphtali. And it came to pass, when Baasha heard thereof, that he left off building Ramah, and let his work cease. (II Chronicles 16:1-5.)
>
> And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and hast not relied on Jehovah thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thy hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim a huge host, with chariots and horsemen exceeding many? yet, because thou didst rely on Jehovah, he delivered them into thy hand. For the eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly; for from henceforth thou shalt have wars. (II Chronicles 16:7-9.)

An alliance with an evil power has never yet done anyone any permanent good.

In the United Nations the United States cooperates with Russia, India, Indonesia, Yugoslavia and other malignant and evil governments. If scripture is a guide in such matters, disaster will come to the United States because of its membership in the United Nations. The United Nations, however, is Vanden Bosch's white hope.

In the broadest sense, then, we are in grave disagreement with the author of "Calvinism and International Relations." We see no special merit in (1) internationalism, or (2) in a super-government, or (3) in centralization of power, or (4) in cooperation with the greatest butchers and tyrants in the history of mankind. We

believe in decentralization; international prosperity by free trade; international responsibility regarding birth rate, by prohibiting immigration according to a nation's good pleasure and its domestic purpose of protecting itself; and above all we believe in domestic and international affairs being made conformable to the Law of God. *That* will make a nation powerful; will promote peace; will promote international prosperity. And, of course, any person and any nation does wisely to be strong militarily as well as obedient to the Law of God. The purpose of military strength is to resist external evil.

If the Law of God were always followed with superb and astute wisdom, then righteousness and prosperity and happiness and safety would universally prevail. The ancient Israelites did not follow that great Law of God with complete faithfulness and wisdom. If they had, they never would have gone under. Nevertheless it should be remembered that the Davidic dynasty ruled for more than 500 years, one of the longest in the history of mankind. One may well wonder whether the United States will last that long when it cooperates with evil nations in the activities of the United Nations.

In summary we may say that we have no confidence whatever (1) that missions, if they teach the social gospel or ideas related to it, or (2) that the United Nations — either one or both together — will be effective agencies in creating a world *community*. It is a chimera to expect it. These agencies will do just the reverse — *as they operate* they will be divisive and will contribute to discord. fn

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